

## **Crude oil spills into wetlands near Ingleside**

More than 1 million gallons spilled, more than 8,000 make it to wetlands

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Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Originally published 09:03 p.m., February 10, 2010

Updated 03:14 a.m., February 11, 2010

INGLESIDE — More than 1 million gallons of crude spilled from three breaches in storage tanks near Ingleside with about 8,400 gallons reaching wetlands, officials said.

Superior Crude Gathering Inc. had been storing crude oil in large tanks at the former Falcon Refinery near Farm-to-Market Road 2725 and Bishop Road.

Company officials noticed a split seam around 3 p.m. Tuesday, said Susan Clewis, regional director for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. They originally thought it was a smaller leak and that it was contained, she said.

“It’s a very large spill,” Clewis said.

She said of the estimated 24,000 barrels of crude oil about 200, or 8,400 gallons, spilled into the wetlands, she said.

The total amount spilled is roughly the amount of gallons needed to fill about 1.5 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Jimmy Martinez, regional director for the Texas General Land Office, said the first rupture was in a 55,000-barrel tank with about 52,000 barrels of crude oil in it. That oil was being pumped into a secondary tank, which also had a rupture, he said.

The oil tanks are located about a quarter-mile east of the Intracoastal Waterway, but the oil only was found in nearby freshwater marshes.

“Our primary concern is to keep the oil from entering coastal waters,” Martinez said.

Four oil-covered birds have been found and taken to the Animal Rehabilitation Keep in Port Aransas.

Clewis said the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality’s is monitoring air quality and later will assess damage to natural resources.

Air quality monitoring had indicated no reason concern, officials said.

Miller Environmental Services was called to assist with cleanup, said Jim Suydam, a spokesman for the Texas General Land Office. The company was able to recover about 10,000 barrels, which was put into tanker trucks.

Additional containment equipment was put in place to stop further spread of the crude oil, he said.

Martinez said the recovered oil will be loaded onto two or three barges early Thursday.

In an e-mail to Ingleside City Manager Jim Gray, Police Chief Stan Bynum said the spill is expected to be cleaned up by Thursday.